

CHAPTER IV

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā Jī

In medieval India wordy warfare between *pandits* was much in vogue. Once a South Indian *pandita* was going round the country challenging every famous *pandita* for *śāstrārtha*¹ with a view to establish himself as *digvijayī*.² After conquering the whole of South India he came to Vṛndāvana. The *pandits* of Vṛndāvana did not have the courage to face him. But they also did not want that the South Indian *pandita* should get away with easy victory over Vraja, which had been an important centre of culture and learning for centuries. They thought that if he could be persuaded to go to Govardhana and challenge *siddha* Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā Jī, he would certainly be defeated. The risk, however, was that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā might, out of humility, or on account of his preoccupation with *bhajana*, accept defeat without entering into *śāstrārtha*. So they went and said to the *pandita*, "Most exalted sir, we are convinced of your extraordinary intelligence and learning. None of

1 Discussion on the true intent of the *śāstras*.

2 World conquerer in *śāstrārtha*.

us is fit even to converse with you. But if you go to Govardhana and defeat Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā in *śāstrārtha*, you would be automatically recognized as world conqueror; since he is known as the crest-jewel of *pandits* all over India. But he will enter into *śāstrārtha* with you only if he considers you a suitable match for him, otherwise he will refuse to talk to you under some pretext or other. You will then have to lure him by saying something disparaging against Vraja, which would touch the softest corner of his heart and compel him to accept your challenge to save the honour of Vraja."

This was enough to enthuse the proud *pandita* to meet and compel Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā to enter into *śāstrārtha*. He went to Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā in Govardhana and said, "I have heard that you are recognized as the crest-jewel of the *pandits* all over the country. I have come to challenge you to prove that you deserve this title by entering into *śāstrārtha* with me. I have already established my supremacy in South India. By defeating you I wish to establish my supremacy in this part of the country as well."

Bābā said, "What you have heard about me is not correct. Far from being a match for a great *pandita* like you, I am not fit even to sit at your feet. *Śāstrārtha* with me has no meaning at all!"

The *pandita* thought that what he was told by the *pandits* of Vṛndāvana was perhaps correct. Bābā was cleverly avoiding him, because he did not consider him to be a suitable match for him.

So he burst out, "I had come here with the expectation that I will find someone in this great seat of culture and learning, who would be a suitable match for me; and with whom I could discuss the *śāstras*. But I find that there is not a single *pandita* here, who can even recite the Vedas correctly. How disgraceful for Vraja!"

Bābā said, "Yes, it is true. There is no one here, who can even recite the Vedas like you. Would you kindly recite some line of *sāma-veda*!" The *pandita* was only looking for an opportunity to show his extraordinary talent. He recited a *śruti-mantra* with great delight and gusto. To his surprise Bābā pointed out three faults in the *svara* (tone and accent) of recitation. The *pandita* said with indignation, "I have yet to find a *pandita* in Bhārata, who can recite the *mantra* better than me. Let me see how you recite it."

Bābā then recited the *mantra* in perfect *sāma-veda* style and *svara*, which the *pandita* had never heard before. He was spell-bound and could not restrain himself from falling at the feet of Bābā and saying, "Mahārāja! You are invincible. There is no one in this world, who can be a match to you. Your learning is not of this world. It is a gift from above."

Truly, Bābā's learning was not of this world. In fact, nothing relating to him was of this world. From the very beginning his life was planned and embellished by powers that are not mundane. His saintly life itself was not planned by him. He was born in a rich family of Orissa in the lineage of the great saint Śrī Narottama Thākura. When

his father Sanātana Kānūnago died, his mother became *sati*.¹ At the time of going to the funeral pyre, she was in an exalted state. In that state she charged her three sons to adopt three different ways of life. She charged her youngest son Baṭa Kṛṣṇa to go to Vṛndāvana and do *bhajana*. Baṭa Kṛṣṇa was later known as *siddha* Kṛṣṇa Dāsa.

A man, who desires to renounce the world to lead the life of a *sādhū* or *saṁnyāsī* has to struggle with himself, with his parents and with the world before renunciation. But Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā's *sādhū* way of life was already planned by spiritual forces. It came to him as a gift from his saintly mother. At the age of 16 he renounced the world and went to Vṛndāvana. After staying in Vṛndāvana for a couple of years, he went to Jaipur with a view to serve Govinda jī. The Mahārāja of Jaipur was pleased to appoint him as *pujārī* (priest) in the temple of Govinda jī. He served Govinda jī with devotion for eight or nine years. However, during this period he was often pestered by sex impulse. This caused him great anxiety. He wondered how, although he had been taking Govinda jī's *prasāda* for so many years, he was still being plagued by sex desires. Was sex even more powerful than Govinda jī's *prasāda*, which was *cinmaya* (transcendental) and was supposed to have the capacity to crush all material desires! There was no one in Jaipur, who could provide

¹ Burning of a chaste wife on the funeral pyre of her husband.

an answer to this question. So he went to Vraja and put his predicament before Jaikṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā of Kāmya-vana.

Bābā said, "Look my son, wood, which is cut from a green tree and dipped in water does not catch fire. Does it prove that fire does not have the capacity to burn? Fire always has the capacity to burn. But it burns the wood dipped in water only when it becomes dry. In order that it may become dry it has to be put in fire constantly for sometime. Similarly, the soul (*jīva*) which has been immersed in the ocean of sensuous enjoyment and sinful activities from times immemorial has to free itself from their adverse effect by practising *bhakti-sādhana* for some time, before it can realize the real nature and feel the full effect of spiritual objects like the *prasāda* of Govinda jī. During *sādhana* one must avoid eating anything, which comes from a person indulging in sensuous or sinful activities, even if it comes in the form of *prasāda* of Govinda jī. Don't you remember that Mahāprabhu refused to eat Jagannātha jī's *prasāda*, which Raghunātha Dāsa purchased out of the money sent to him by his father and said, "Even *prasāda* purchased out of the money of a *viṣayī* (worldly minded person) invites *rajoguṇa*."¹

In this connection Jaikṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā narrated a story. He said, "A prostitute of Bengal had a change of heart. She took *dīkṣā* from a *vaiṣṇava guru* and wanted to offer all her wealth

¹ The strand or principle of worldly activity.

to him. The *guru* advised her to go to Vṛndāvana and offer all her ornaments and wealth to Govinda jī. She went to Vṛndāvana. But when she expressed her desire to the *pujārī* of Govinda jī, he refused to accept anything from her. This broke her heart. She decided to fast unto death. She went to the bank of Yamunā and lay there without taking even a drop of water for three days. On the fourth day Govinda jī appeared before the *pujārī* in a dream and said, "You go to the bank of Yamunā, where that prostitute is lying. Take all her wealth, purchase provisions and offer *bhoga* (food offered to the deity) to me." The *pujārī* did likewise. He offered *bhoga* in a huge quantity and arranged for a grand feast. All the *vaiṣṇavas* were invited. The same night the *vaiṣṇavas* had nocturnal emission. They got suspicious about the *prasāda* they had taken the previous day. When on enquiry from the *pujārī* they found that the *bhoga* to Govinda jī that day was offered by the prostitute, there was no end to their agony. They started fasting to expiate for the sin committed in eating the *bhoga* offered by the prostitute. On the third day of the fast each of the *vaiṣṇavas* had a similar dream, in which Govinda jī said, "Why are you starving? Do you want to commit suicide?"

The *vaiṣṇavas* replied, "What else can we do, when You accept the offerings of a prostitute, and we have to eat her food; because it comes to us in the form of Your *prasāda*? Does that not destroy our *dharma* (religiousness)?"

"But when did I ask you to eat the prostitute's

food? I can digest everything, but I do not ask you to eat everything that I eat," said Govinda jī.

"If food offered by an impure person comes to us as your *prasāda* what should we do? Should we commit an offence by refusing it?"

"Under the circumstance you should take only a particle of it to obviate the offence," advised Govinda jī.

Bābā further added, "With regard to Govinda jī's *prasāda* you should act upon the advice of Govinda jī Himself, because Govinda jī's *bhoga* is made with the financial aid of the Mahārājā, who is a *viśayī* (worldly minded) person."

Kṛṣṇa Dāsa took Jaikṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā's advice to heart. He decided not to take Govinda jī's *prasāda*. He left Jaipur and began to do *bhajana* in Domana-vana, a forest near Nandagrāma in Vraja. He did not take *prasāda* from any temple or *āśrama*. He begged wheat flour from Vrajabāsis, mixed some *neema* leaves in it and added some water to make it like a ball. He ate the ball, sometimes baked, sometimes unbaked. The result was that he became weaker and weaker and lost his eyesight. He could no more go for begging. For a number of days he lived only on the water of a pond nearby. In the end he became so weak that it was not possible for him even to go to the pond. Two or three days passed without a drop of water.

Then Rādhārāṇī's heart melted. She said to Lalitā, Her closest *sakhī* (friend): "Don't you see Lalitā? Kṛṣṇa Dāsa is starving. Would you let

him starve like this and bring disgrace to me? Take this *thāla* (plate) of *prasāda* and go and feed him."

Lalitā took the *thāla* of *prasāda* from Rādhārāṇī's hand. She went to Domana-vana in the guise of a *vraja-bālā* (a *vrajabāsi* girl) and said to Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, "Bābā, take this *prasāda*. My mother has taken pity on you and sent this." The sweet words of the girl and the unearthly smell of the *prasāda* gave new life to dying Kṛṣṇa Dāsa. He sat up and ate the *prasāda*. After eating he began to clean the *thāla*. The girl asked, "Bābā why don't you go for begging?"

"How can I go Lālī? My eye-sight is gone."

"Will you go if the sight is restored? Look, my mother has sent an ointment. I shall apply it to your eyes and your sight will be restored." As she said this, she touched his eyes with her finger. With the soft and soothing touch of her finger Bābā's sight was fully restored. He could see everything, but not the girl and the *thāla*, which he had cleaned just before. Both had mysteriously disappeared, but their heavenly smell still filled the environment. Who was that girl? Where had she come from? How did she suddenly disappear? And how the mere touch of her finger restored his sight! All this remained a mystery to him.

He kept restlessly musing on this for three days. On the third day at night, when he was half-asleep, he saw that suddenly his cottage was

aglow with divine light and filled with divine fragrance. Rādhārāṇī stood before him with a sweet smile on Her face. She said in Her ambrosial voice, "Now what are you musing about? No more worry and fear for you. You have attained the end of your life. From now on I am yours and you are Mine. With the touch of the hand of My *sakhī* Lalitā you have been blessed not only with *dr̥ṣṭi-śakti* (power to see) but with all other *śaktis* (powers). Now go to Govardhana and find an easy path for my attainment for the *vaiṣṇavas* having faith in Me."

After saying this Rādhārāṇī disappeared. For a long time Her words: "I am yours and you are Mine," kept resounding in his ears and he kept swimming freely in the ocean of Love that seemed to flow from them. The whole night he was tossed up and down by the waves of the ocean and his body was shaken by powerful under-currents of *sāttvika-bhāvas*.¹

In the morning he somehow collected himself and went to Govardhana. There he began to live in a place called Cakaleśvara. Though Bābā was now accomplished in *bhajana*, he could not do anything except *bhajana*. For though *bhajana* is a means, it is also an end in itself. Even Bhagavān is always engaged in *bhajana*. While the devotee does the *bhajana* of Bhagavān,

1 External signs of internal emotion attendant upon Kṛṣṇa-prema. They are Stambha (stupor), Sveda (perspiration), Romāñca (thrilling of the body), Svava-bhaṅga (break of voice), Vepathu (trembling), Vaivarūṇya (change of colour), Āśru (tears), and Pralaya (loss of consciousness).

1 Term of endearment for a girl.

Bhagavān does the *bhajana* of the devotee. During those days there were a number of *vaiṣṇavas* in Rādhākūṇḍa and Govardhana, who did *bhajana* on the basis of the Sanskr̥ta works of Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Sanātana and other Gosvāmīs. Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā also wanted to do the same. But he did not know Sanskr̥ta. Therefore he started learning *Harināmāmṛta Vyākaraṇa*¹ from an old *vaiṣṇava*. But, he soon found himself in a predicament. He felt that his study was a hindrance in *bhajana* and *bhajana* was a hindrance in study. He could not reconcile the two. But he could neither leave *bhajana* nor study. The problem became so acute and painful that he began to think of committing suicide by drowning in Mānasī Gaṅgā. That night he heard someone calling, "Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, Kṛṣṇa Dāsa!" from outside his *kutī* (cottage). Coming out of the *kutī*, he saw Sanātana Gosvāmī and Lalitā Devī standing before him. He was overwhelmed with joy and bewilderment. He lay prostrate at their feet and did not know what to do. Sanātana Gosvāmī said, fondly rubbing his hand on his head, "Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, how are you? Do you get *mādhukarī* alright?"

"Yes *prabhu*," replied Kṛṣṇa Dāsa with folded hands.

Then Sanātana Gosvāmī said, "Look, *śāstras* are infinite. One need not die because he cannot learn them all. I bless that from today you do not have to learn any *śāstra*, all the *śāstras*

themselves illumine your heart. Do not think of committing suicide. We have a great mission to be fulfilled through you."

Lalitā said, "I bless that whenever you remember us, your heart be illumined by our presence; and a new method of *bhajana* be unfolded by you for the benefit of the *vaiṣṇavas* residing in Vraja." After this, both touched Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā's head with their feet and disappeared.

Now Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā instead of learning *Harināmāmṛta Vyākaraṇa* started teaching it to students. He also started giving instructions in a new method of *līlā-smaraṇa* (contemplation of divine *līlā*) devised by him, in which the *aṣṭa-yāma-līlā*¹ of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as described in *Govinda-Līlāmṛta*, *Samkalpa-kalpadruma*, *Kṛṣṇadāgītī-cintāmaṇi*, *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta* and other scriptures is meditated upon along with the *aṣṭa-yāma-līlā* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

In *aṣṭa-yāma-līlā-smaraṇa*, the *sādhaka* imagines himself to be in the transcendental body (*siddha deha*) appropriate for the type of *bhakti* to which he is naturally inclined, and to be serving Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa day and night through that body.² By constant meditation or *smaraṇa* he makes the whole of Vraja-līlā live before him. He enters into that *līlā* in his imagination and, by serving Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa according to the particular *bhāva* or mode of *bhakti* adopted by

1 Līlā pertaining to eight parts of the day, each part consisting of three hours.

2 *mane nija siddha deha kariyā bhāvana, rātri dine kare vraje kṛṣṇera sevana.*

him, lives in the ecstasy of that vicarious enjoyment. The imaginary transcendental body (*antaścintita siddha deha*), however, is not wholly imaginary. It is a mental reflection of the transcendental body, which Bhagavān, out of infinite kindness, imparts to the devotee. That the transcendental body is a gift of Bhagavān is corroborated by the second line of sloka 3.9.11 of Śrīmad Bhāgavata, which runs as follows:

*yadyaddhiyā ta urugāya vibhāvayanti
tat-tad-vapuḥ praṇayase sad-anugrahāya*¹.

The *vaiṣṇavas* whom Bābā gave instruction in *aṣṭakālīna-līlā-smaraṇa* assembled every evening in his cottage and reported about their *bhajana*. One day, one of the *vaiṣṇavas* instead of reporting anything started weeping. When Bābā inquired about the cause of weeping, he said, "Bābā, I could not do any *bhajana* today. In my morning *līlā-smaraṇa*, when I was ornamenting the right arm of Rādhārāṇī, my mind was so engrossed in the lustrous beauty of her arm that I tried very much to disengage my mind, but could not, and *smaraṇa* could not proceed further."

Bābā said to him encouragingly, "Only your *bhajana* today has been successful."

Many stories are current about Bābā's own *bhajana-siddhi* (accomplishment in *bhajana*).

Once in his *smaraṇa* Bābā was participating in the *holī-līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. In the *līlā* his body was smeared with *gulāla* (vermillion), *kastūrī* (musk) and colours of different kind. When he went out of his *kutī* after *smaraṇa*, he was still half-conscious. People were surprised to see him coloured through and through and to smell the fragrance of transcendental musk emanating from his body.¹

Once Bābā saw in his *smaraṇa* that Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa had just come out of the Mānasī Gaṅgā after *jala-keli* (dalliance in water). Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other *sakhīs* were busy dressing and adorning them. Rūpa *mañjarī*² and others were collecting material for adornment. Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā was standing by in his *siddha* *mañjarī*-form with a phial of scent in his hands. When he heard Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa talking mirthfully and jestingly, he was so overwhelmed with *bhāva* that he began to tremble and the phial of scent fell from his hand and broke. Its fragrance spread all over. People, who came to bathe in the Mānasī Gaṅgā were surprised to scent a sweet and heavenly smell such as they had never experienced before.

When they inquired from Bābā about it he said, "What should I say! I am an *aparādhī*

1 Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī interprets the text to mean that Bhagavān imparts to the devotee a transcendental body exactly like the one, which he imagines himself to possess and which is essential for the particular mode of *bhakti* practised by him, because He is bound to do so on account of His always being subservient to the devotee.

1 When any effect of the divine *līlā* on the transcendental body appears on the physical body that is regarded as a sign of *siddhi* or accomplishment in *bhajana*.

2 A *sakhī*, who in her loving service is inclined towards Rādhā more than towards Kṛṣṇa. Her *bhāva* is purer than that of other *sakhīs*. On account of the purity of her *bhāva* she is entitled to the service of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa even in their esoteric *līlā*.

(offender). I am not fit for the service of *priyā-priyatama* (my most beloved Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa). At the time of their service I let fall the phial of scent from my hand. The smell you are scenting is the fragrance of the same."

Once Bābā went to bathe in the Mānasī Gaṅgā with *karavā*¹ in hand. He saw *priyā-priyatama* dallying in the water. He was so overwhelmed with *bhāva* that he jumped into the fathomless waters of Mānasī Gaṅgā. No one else was there at that time. When he did not reach back to his cottage for a long time, his disciples began to search for him. But he could not be found. There was wailing and crying all over Vraja. But they were all surprised and happy, when they saw him coming out of Mānasī Gaṅgā after seven days. When they asked him where he had been for seven days, he was amazed and said, "Seven days! Why, I am just coming out after my bath! "This seems to explode the old principle of absoluteness of space and time and confirm the new scientific principle of relativity of space and time. Bābā had entered a world, where the dimensions of space and time are altogether different. But the transcendental world of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa transcends even the scientific principle of relativity. We are told by *śāstras* that in that world space and time also serve Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa; they expand and contract according to their wish.

Once Jasvanta Singh, the Rājā of

Bharata-pura went to *siddha* Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā and said, "Bābā, I want to render some service. Kindly let me know what I can do for you"

Bābā said, "We *sādhus* of Vraja get *mādhukari* from the Vrajabāsis. You can serve us by serving them." The Rājā gave much land and fortune to the Vrajabāsis in alms for which they express their gratefulness to him even today. After that he came to Bābā again and said, "I shall be blessed if you also kindly accept something."

Inscrutable are the ways in which the *siddha* saints sometimes behave. Bābā said, "If you are so keen on my service, do one thing. You have a large number of queens. Send to me the queen you love most."

The Rājā obeyed. His dearest queen Rānī Lakṣminī came to Bābā surrounded on all sides by curtains so that no one except Bābā could see her. As soon as the jingling sound of the *kinkinī*¹ and *nūpura*² of the Rānī resounded in Bābā's ears, he was reminded of Rādhārānī's *kinkinī* and *nūpura* and was transported into ecstasy. With eyes wide open he kept looking at her as if looking at Rādhārānī. The Rānī also stood stock-still, benumbed and astounded, at a distance of about eight or ten yards from him. This continued for about three hours. The female attendants of the Rānī out of anxiety and curiosity lifted the curtains a little to see what was happening. They were surprised to see that the

1 A girdle set with tiny bells producing a sweet jingling sound.

2 A tinkling ornament worn round the ankles.

1 An earthen pot with a nozzle.

Rānī was standing still in a half-conscious state and Bābā was constantly looking at her. They reported this to the Rājā. The Rājā came and took the Rānī away. For how long could she remain standing motionless like a statue? But Bābā continued sitting in the same state the whole day and night. The next day he became half-conscious and the third day fully conscious. The Rājā had no knowledge of the state of *bhāva* (transcendental emotion) in the higher stages of *bhakti*. So the whole affair aroused suspicion in his mind. Bābā then called him, placed his hand upon his forehead and blessed him. Immediately his suspicion was gone. He realized that the sweet sound of the *kinkinī* and *nūpura* of the Rānī had acted as *uddīpana vibhāva* (enchanting excitant), and blazed in Bābā's mind the consciousness of Rādhārāṇī; and that for two days continually he was absorbed in the *darśana* of Rādhārāṇī in place of the queen.

This episode brought about a total change in Rānī Lakṣminī. Standing before Bābā for three hours she had felt that Bābā was instilling *bhakti* into her heart through his eyes. From a Rānī given to luxurious living, she became a devotee. The stories of her devotion are still remembered in Vraja. Once she went to Rādhākuṇḍa with a view to spend a large amount of money in the service of the *vaiṣṇava sādhus* living there. But the *sādhus* said they could not accept the service of a queen. This brought tears in her eyes. She said, "Kindly bless me so that in my next life I am not born in a royal family, but in a family in

which I am considered fit for the service of the *vaiṣṇavas*."

This moved the *vaiṣṇavas*. They said, "You can do one thing. If you prepare cow-dung cakes with your own hands and sell them, we can accept the money you thus earn yourself." Rānī did the same.

Bābā used to hear *bhakti-śāstras* read out to him by capable *vaiṣṇavas*. It is said that at the time of hearing the *pāṭha* he used to be so much overwhelmed with *sāttvika* bhāvas that he would have incessant flow of tears from his eyes, phlegm from his nose and saliva from his mouth. Two persons sitting on either side of him continuously tried to wipe his face but could not.

There was hardly any *vaiṣṇava* in Vraja, who did not go to Bābā for advice regarding *bhajana*. Though Bābā was himself always absorbed in *bhajana*, he welcomed everyone and encouraged him in *bhajana* by giving him necessary instructions. Most of the *sādhakas*, whom Bābā gave instructions in *bhajana*, became *siddha*. Prominent among them were Kṛṣṇadāsa (the second) of Govardhana, Nityānanda Dāsa of Madan Mohan Thaura, Balarāma Dāsa of Jhānumaṇḍala and Lālā Bābū (Kṛṣṇadāsa, the third).

